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THE DIRECTOR OF
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

National Intelligence Officers

13 March 1981

NOTE FOR: Evan

As you are aware, we are getting increasingly nervous about the Polish situation, although we don't have any specific hard evidence to say that the Soviets or the Poles are about to move. The attached memorandum by [] puts forth his hypothesis on the likely course of events. The rest of us feel it is plausible, and several of us have strong visceral sensations that he is right. The most logical time for a move would appear to us to be a Sunday, but preparations by the Poles have not advanced far enough for us to believe that they would move on Sunday, the 15th. Sunday, the 22nd, looks like a much better date. [] as he reported this morning, will convene his Community Representatives Monday morning to review the bidding.

D. L.

Richard Lehman

Attachment:
as stated

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1 March 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: NIO for Warning

SUBJECT : The Case for an Alert Memo on an Imminent Showdown in Poland and Possible Soviet Military Intervention

1. There is an impressive array of indications that the Soviet-Polish talks in Moscow on 4 March marked a major breakpoint in the Polish crisis. The Soviet leaders applied overwhelming pressure on Kania and Jaruzelski to abandon what Moscow sees as a dangerous policy of appeasement. They probably confronted the Poles with an ultimatum: either move promptly against Solidarity, KOR, and reformists within the Polish party or face the consequences of Soviet/Warsaw Pact military intervention. Senior Polish officials have acknowledged that Soviet pressures on the Polish leaders played an important role in their decision to alter course and "neutralize" dissidents within Solidarity.

2. After six months of vacillation and factional divisions, the Soviet leadership confronted Kania and Jaruzelski with a united front on 4 March. Brezhnev's conversion to a hardline policy aimed at forcing the issue with the Polish leadership came after he reportedly was warned by Soviet and East European hardliners, but particularly the Soviet military establishment, that the Polish crisis will soon pass the point of no return if not checked.

3. The failure of the 10 March announcement of SOYUZ-81 to mention the Helsinki Accords requirement of 21 days notice raises the possibility of deception: that SOYUZ-81 will provide the pretext for the introduction of Soviet forces into Poland in support of the use of Polish security and military forces, under a declaration of martial law, against strikes called by Solidarity.

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4. The fact that we have no indications of Soviet mobilization, logistics preparations, and troop movements in the Western Military Districts should not be taken as reliable evidence of the absence of Soviet intervention preparations. Having coerced the Poles into shifting to confrontation tactics, the Soviets almost certainly would take a variety of steps to raise their intervention readiness to respond to the contingency that Polish forces will be unable to cope with widespread public disorder and strikes. There is good reason to believe that Soviet military leaders have serious doubts about the reliability of Polish military forces if ordered to enforce martial law.

5. We may be dealing here with a classic case of Soviet deception. The failure to give the required 21-day advance notice of SOYUZ-81 may be designed to conceal the magnitude of the exercise. Aside from the problem of chronic cloud cover, the absence of the usual indications of Soviet mobilization, logistics preparations, and troops movements may reflect successful concealment and deception under a preplanned scenario for intervention. Moscow obviously has a strong incentive to avoid tipping its hand in advance and to deny Western governments the last-minute opportunity to publicize Soviet military measures in an effort to deter intervention.

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